



ON TOP OF PRODUCTION

A Case Study of Three Short Films

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1 Introduction

“So what do you actually do...as a producer?”

Since I started at TAMK University of Applied Sciences, School of Art and Media in 2004, that has been the question I have been asked several times. Most people are familiar with the term “producer”, and most of them say it all sounds “challenging”, “important” or “big”, but they really have no idea of what is actually involved in doing the job.

What is a producer? Why do films need one in the first place? What does it take to work at the top of a production, and why would anyone want to take on such a huge responsibility? These are some of the questions I will try and answer in my thesis. I will do it with the knowledge and experience gained over the course of working in various producer’s roles on three short fiction films: *Tunnel* (*Tunneli*, 2008), *Sideline* (*Sivutyö*, 2008) and *Morocco* (2008). On *Tunnel* I worked as both producer and production manager; on *Sideline*, I was the production manager, and on *Morocco*, I was credited as producer. In addition to these, I will also draw my experience from other productions in television, events and radio, as well as knowledge gained through professional literature.

It is important to understand the context of my experience. All three films were produced with the support of my university. Also, the films were produced in Finland – a country where the film industry is, and always has been, relatively small.

2 The Producer

2.1 A multitude of functions and roles

The actual term “producer” is used in numerous ways these days. Sometimes even to the point of confusion within the field. As the professionals from Yleisradio point out in their book (Bertling-Rantala-Saksala 2007, p. 8), there are Executive Producers, Associate Producers, Series Producers, Line Producers, Production Managers, Production Assistants and several other terms in use. Naturally, the use of a term depends upon the media or production itself. Even if two people have the same credit, their job descriptions might vary enormously. But despite the various titles, most people wanting to work in production roles must have things in common. I would think anyone who has a substantial production responsibility, has similar characteristics in them. When thinking about the producer’s roles I have worked in so far, Saku Tuominen, the Creative Director of Broadcasters/ Zodiak Television Oy, says it quite aptly, with twelve years of experience in producing:

It is crucial that you are able to control the whole (production) chain and be interested in everything. --- You have to be able to hold fifteen balls in the air at the same time. (Oksman R. 2002, 40) ¹

I myself have a somewhat limited experience of the role of a producer. This is simply because in university productions the actual producer is the university. Despite the fact that a student-producer creates the budget, writes the final contracts and fulfills much of the legal obligations of a production, my experience is more in the role of Production Manager or Line Producer. I was mostly on the set, always driving one of the film vehicles, always sleeping only a few hours a night.

¹ Personal, free translation

I would find it difficult to sit in an office and not engage with the crew and actors. My involvement in production up to this point has not only been about being a ‘producer’ but also developing the capacity to perform other tasks not necessarily associated with the defined term and credit. It has been about *producing* in a general sense: having to solve both the big and the small challenges. Having said all this, for the purposes of this thesis, I will mostly use the term “producer” to refer to my role.

2.2 What does it take?

No limits.

(Marko Röhr, Producer, Matila & Röhr Productions Oy/ in Oksman R. 2002, 3)

Riku Oksman talks aptly about the “can do” spirit that every successful producer has. Everything is possible, one way or another. It’s all about imagination and persistence. This doesn’t mean a producer can always have it all; it simply means everything is worth giving a shot. Working around things and seeing all the options prove again and again that there is always a way. On the other hand, being effective and persistent often brings out more demands from the director and the crew, which means it’s the producer’s job to be the “reality check”.

I have often thought about why I want to do production, usually during those frantic days before filming begins. In 2004, I actually considered applying to study cinematography. An interesting thought when thinking about it now, a role that would have a very different perspective on the field. Don’t get me wrong, I definitely don’t regret going into production instead. But from time to time, one of the “issues” for me personally is the balancing between art and commerce. As a cinematographer I wouldn’t have had to worry about it in the same way.

I would have had a chance to concentrate on one main part of the production process, filming, and give it my all. I would have been driven by creativity, and I would have had a chance to make purely creative decisions. In the end it might have not been the right direction though, as I feel I have many of the skills needed particularly in producing: social, communication, organizing and leadership skills; determination and persistence. Also, in many successful productions, the producer's creative contribution is, in fact, a big part of the final product.

A producer has to be a major driving force in the production, the one in charge, the one that takes all the feedback (particularly the negative) and the one that has to be aware of every facet of the production. As a producer I learned that to know everything, I simply had to build a strong, reliable group of people around me. I didn't need to know all the answers myself; I just needed to know where to get them...quickly.

The most important thing is to find the right people to do the right jobs.

You must take care of them and motivate them in a way that always keeps them going.

(Saku Tuominen, Creative Director, Zodiak Television Oy/ in Oksman R. 2002, 43)²

In addition to a producer having to provide the balance between art and commerce, there is another point that might become an issue for some producers, and particularly others working in production department. It is the fact that most of the production work is invisible. Having to deal with nearly every aspect of the production doesn't necessarily mean one will receive full credit for the work. Sometimes this can feel unfair, but in my opinion, this is something one just has to make peace with. It all naturally depends on the product. In film industry's ceremonies the person with the actual credit "Producer" gets recognition in ceremonies as we all know.

² Personal, free translation

A producer's job is often invisible --- sometimes the credits are elsewhere.

Say, for instance, I have been working on a script. I can't tell what parts I took part in.

All I can say is – It looks great.

(Hilkka Salo, Producer, YLE Draama/ in Bertling – Rantala – Saksala, 2007, 51)³

One thing I didn't fully realize, until I was running around on my first actual film set as a producer, was my importance as a leader. People relied on me. After doing pre-production alone for months or only working closely with the director, cinematographer and some other production crew, I was suddenly the “mother” on the set. Good leadership meant understanding and respecting everyone's role and ensuring my availability to all. I had to try to fuel the passion that everyone needs to feel. Even if I was handling the story, scheduling, crew and budget at the same time, it didn't mean I could not enjoy it. “To speak of having fun making movies doesn't mean you are not treating it seriously”, as Ian Lewis points out in his book (Ian Lewis 2001, Introduction). In my opinion, humor can in fact be the essential last resort at a crucial moment where both cast and crew are under enormous pressure.

Having to juggle with crew and actors, budgets and contracts, never-ending phone calls and all sorts of other challenges, along with all the characteristics mentioned earlier (p. 5) a producer obviously has to have flexibility and perseverance. Without an ongoing learning process and personal growth it is difficult to succeed in this business. Mistakes are best to be learned from, and the only way to learn from mistakes – and successes for that matter - is through hands-on experience. Most of the books I have read started making sense only after I had some experience as a producer or a production manager.

³ Personal, free translation

3 Pre-production

3.1 The clock is ticking.

Filmmaking is a work of craft. It's a work of thousands of beautifully crafted details slotting together in a perfect form. It's a work of making magic, but the magic can only be made if your feet are firmly on the ground. It's a very concrete business making it real.

(Lewis I. 2001, 24)

The first thing needed when thinking about pre-production is communication skills. It's all about negotiation, bargaining and convincing all the possible sponsors and partners. A producer is not only selling the product (in this case a short film), but also oneself. I had to convince others that the final film was going to be incredible and was something they, without a doubt, wanted to participate in. This is where passion, determination and imagination are needed. Pretty much everything is worth trying. At some point I felt like all I did was beg for any kind of support: stock, sponsors, catering assistance, free electricity, cheap deals for props...and the list went on. And all this had to be done with an on-going enthusiasm.

At the TAMK School of Art and Media, the proceedings when starting a production are simple. After the script has gotten a green light, the producer, director and cinematographer and possibly other production staff attend a project meeting. In this meeting they pitch the production to those in charge at the university, supplying all possible documentation. The film either gets permission to go into production or not. Also, in this particular meeting, the school decides how much money it is willing to invest in the film. The rest of the budget is up to the student producer/s.

For me personally, pre-production is a contradictory time period: I eagerly familiarize myself with the script and come up with the best possible crew. I dive into all the paperwork, while seeking locations and negotiating with all the potential partners. This stage is defined as the most important and crucial part of a producer's job. It's my job to make sure the basis for the filming is as good as possible. But at the same time I can't wait to get all of it over and done with and get on the set!

It's very tempting to focus all the attention of making the film on the actual days of filming. You can't wait to get the toys out of the box because it feels so grown-up and real, and you're actually doing it not just talking about it. But it's nearly always a mistake. Time spent in preparation is never time wasted.

(Lewis I. 2001, 23)

Pre-production, in my experience, is rarely long enough to get everything organized on time without a slight panic. Whether it is because of the productions I have done or the way I personally work is still a mystery to me. The fact is a producer is always receiving new information on the shots, cast, locations or something else only a couple of days before the shoot. There are always changes and surprises, so there is no room for "freezing up". There simply has to be a solution, and I am the one who has to come up with it. Sometimes that solution is learning when to say no. I have had several examples of cast and crew testing me by asking for something that is not really necessary at all. It would just be nice to have.

There is only so much one can do as a producer or production manager. Trying to do it all alone helps no one in the end. A producer has to realize that she isn't irreplaceable. If I feel like I am, I am on the wrong path. What if something would happen to me in the middle of the filming, say I might get ill for instance? My advice is there should always be one other person that knows everything the producer knows, in every production. When in production, this person is the one I can always lean on, the one who can share all my concerns, successes, joys and

sorrows, the one, physically and mentally, I can rely on. Luckily, I have managed to find two of these people. Laura, whom I have worked with previously, and Anna-Maija, whom I got to know during the pre-production of *Tunnel*. She not only became my production assistant, but a very close friend and my “rock” for the next two short films as well. I couldn’t have done it all without her.

3.2 *Tunnel*

Tunnel was the first of my three films. At the time I thought it would also be the only one, so the pressure was definitely there. I was asked to be the producer during the spring of 2007, and production was scheduled for November. This gave me plenty of time to slowly start pre-production, although I was working that summer as well. At that point I still didn’t realize being both the producer and the production manager is a bad idea, so I simply decided to combine these two roles.

The main location in *Tunnel* was a train. This made it a challenging production from the very beginning. Luckily, I started the search for the train location early enough, in May of 2007. The first contact was naturally the Finnish State Railways, a company that basically owns a monopoly on the railroad traffic in this country. After months of negotiations, several phone calls, e-mails and reassurances, they came up with the final answer: No. A scene where the main character exits the train and starts to walk towards the light at the end of the tunnel (an important symbolic shot within the film), was a huge problem for the railroad company. It was strictly against their safety rules and values, even if the train was at a paddock, away from other train traffic. The representatives asked if the actress could simply decide to stay in the train instead...hardly something that the scriptwriter/ director thought was a viable solution. I have to say that was one of those moments when I realized how little people outside the film industry understand about the film-making process.

After giving up on the Finnish State Railways, I searched some more. Finally, as a result of more phone calls and visits in railway museums, we found our contact. An organization from Porvoo had a museum train near Pasila train station in Helsinki. They also happened to organize a tourist trip between the two cities around the time of our planned filming. We had finally found our train, and we would even be able to film in the train while it was moving.



1) Our train, Helsinki. Photo: Ruben Winters

After solving the biggest challenge, pre-production started rolling. While scouting our train in Helsinki, we happened to notice that a fairly well-known film production company, Kinoproductions Oy, was located in the same train yard. I contacted them, and they turned out to be very helpful. This eased the whole process enormously; we not only found the main location but also solved electricity issues, found a place where we could keep ourselves warm and keep the equipment

safe. They even provided a place where we could eat and organize make up and costumes. I managed to come up with some very successful cooperative deals, simply because I had the courage to ask.

The single thing that distinguishes this kind of filmmaking from the mainstream of feature film or television production is that there's no money. The producers have to ask favors of nearly everyone. And they have to convince the people that they're asking for help that their help is worth giving.

(Lewis I. 2001, 17)

Tunnel is a fine example of a project where not only having to find the right contacts, but finding the right individuals in different organizations made an enormous difference to the production. This is something that I often consider pure luck. An attempt to achieve the smallest production details from obtaining a certain key or finding the perfect location to merely getting a hold of a person can change the direction of the whole production. If a particular contact happens to be helpful and get excited about the production, things start running smoothly. On the other hand, if that individual has had a bad experience with film crews or simply a bad day, everything can go wrong from that point onward. With *Tunnel* we were lucky enough to find that forthcoming individual. He was not only in charge of the train itself but also the safety of the main location, the old train yard. His good will saved me from an enormous amount of trouble. He also chose to make personal sacrifices he certainly didn't have to make, simply because he saw us working hard, with passion and determination.

3.3 *Sideline* (Sivutyö)

We had barely finished filming *Tunnel* and just started post-production when I got deep into the pre-production of *Sideline*. It had already gone through its project meeting at the university, and I had done the best I could with its pre-production while working on *Tunnel*. Now, it was crucial to get everything organized on time for filming in early January of 2008.

Professionally, *Sideline* was taken a step further for several reasons. We were able to promote the film on a whole new level because the director was already known in the industry through her family ties. The topic of the film (students being forced to practice prostitution for financial reasons) had been discussed in the media for some time. In addition, the cast were well-known, professional actors, which made it easier to reach sponsors and assure other partners.

For me personally, *Sideline* was a very different kind of production experience compared to *Tunnel*, mainly because my role was limited to production manager. In many ways it gave me an entirely different perspective, since I didn't have as much paperwork, sponsors or other commercial issues to deal with. Besides me, the film had a Producer, two Associated Producers and a Production Assistant/Location Manager (my "rock", whom I had already worked with on *Tunnel*). For the first time I had a chance to concentrate on the practicalities of production. I clearly recall feeling relieved to have a familiar production assistant on board, who I could easily delegate some of my work to her to take care of. This was essential because I was going through a personal crisis at the time which made it crucial that I had learned to allocate some things and trust other people. All in all, pre-production was very different from the previous film.

One of the main things we should have discussed more inside the producing group was the precise job descriptions of the different roles: who is to do what when there are five people in the production department. Because it wasn't discussed, it became an issue during the filming, when it was the last thing I personally wanted to worry about.

3.4 *Morocco*

Morocco was, without a doubt, the most challenging of the three films. The whole production was definitely a last-minute project that I had no intension of participating in while still working on both *Tunnel* and *Sideline*. The starting-point of the project was based on friendships formed during TTVO's international media program some years earlier. The director who had gone back to the United Kingdom had started his own production company, Finite Productions, and was now working on a short film he wanted to film in Finland, not only because of the locations, but also because of the talent he had met in our university. Aside from Finite Productions, another British company co-produced the film. It was impossible for me to refuse when he ask me to be the producer. I wanted to work with this talented director again; I was eager to learn more about international co-producing, in this case Finnish film students working with British professionals, and I found the script itself rather interesting as well as challenging from a producer's point of view. And that it certainly was.

As hard as it is to believe when looking back, we took *Morocco* to a project meeting at the university only a month after finishing filming *Sideline*, and the filming was scheduled to start by the end of February - a schedule that gave us very little time to actually stop and concentrate on anything properly and allowed no room for mistakes. Once again, I somehow managed to talk my "right hand" into *Morocco*,

this time to work as the production manager. In reality, mainly because of the extremely tight schedule, we shared the production responsibilities as much as possible without regard for the titles, which were only there for the credits.

What made *Morocco* so demanding during pre-production was the fact that the director himself had to be in the United Kingdom for most of it. Communication happened by phone, Skype or e-mail. These were useful but could not compensate for not having him there in person. A further thing that stretched my “professional imagination” was the budget which was fairly small compared to the demands coming from the U.K. We were given the task to find and a perfect cabin location (surrounded with enough snow to look good, which we didn’t have during most of the pre-production), an accommodation nearby for both English cast and Finnish crew, a high-definition camera with additional equipment from Helsinki, two different cars for the filming as well as production vehicles and naturally enough petrol to make them all run. Fortunately, the university took part in the financial role by letting us use some of its equipment and vehicles.

4 Production

4.1 Action!

When it is time to finally start filming, I usually feel relief and massive stress at the same time. Every production is larger than life. Suddenly there is a bubble between the production and the rest of the world. I have no idea what is happening outside the production, and I don't really even want to know. Not always easy for a single-mum. Every day is a race against time; every move I make has a consequence. Every mistake feels huge, and every successful decision is a bull's eye.

There is something about the production that is hard to explain to anyone who hasn't experienced it. The atmosphere, all that adrenaline, is one of the reasons I am a producer. One of the things I have had to force myself to learn is to keep the big picture in mind; my goal is to make sure this film gets made with as little trouble as possible. My goal is to make everyone else's job as painless as possible. There will always be challenges, hardship or misfortune, but it is my job to try and keep a cool head and do the best I can to the best of my ability for the sake of the final film. Sounds simple, but it is not. It is extremely challenging not to get stuck on several small problems and issues instead of calmly multi-tasking and delegating. It is very important to keep in mind that everything will get solved, one way or another, sooner or later. The sun will rise the next day even if something doesn't go as planned.

4.2 *Tunnel*

From day one, we were determined to get through the production as professionally as possible, even on a low budget. *Tunnel* was the first high-definition production made in the School of Art and Media, which made it even more challenging for all of us. Including myself, it became a part of four other student's thesis, which guaranteed we would aim high. We decided to gather a big enough crew, not give up on the sort of locations we wanted, have enough vehicles during the filming and be precise with everything else. The fact that we were to film partly in Helsinki and in a train between Helsinki and Porvoo was probably the biggest challenge. With a pile of maps, lots of kilometers driven, long-hour days, some accommodation hassles and endless organizing, we pulled it off.

Besides the train we also filmed in the People's Education College of Voionmaa, a sales office located in the middle of Tampere, an old, underground tunnel and outside on a street in the city. In all these places, excluding the street shoot, open-minded and helpful contacts made things proceed much easier. For me, it made it even clearer that every contact and connection is highly important. I understood that to get people to help and listen to my needs, I had to treat them with respect. As I said to the crew then, and as I say in every crew meeting before filming, just because we are shooting a film doesn't mean the whole world is. We can't expect people to understand what we are doing, how we do it and why. We need to treat every "outsider", even just a passer-by at a film set, with patience and respect, and hopefully we will receive some in return. If we don't, we can't let our frustration get the best of us. All we can do is to try and concentrate on what we are there to do.



2) Street location in Tampere city. Photo: Andrea Kapavik

One of the biggest hardships with *Tunnel* had to do with scheduling - a reality I have come across frequently in university productions. It seems that in low budget films the decision is to try to save money by saving time. In my experience cutting production days only causes more problems. The crew gets tired; contacts get frustrated and actors don't perform as well... there are too many risks. Then again in this case, as in some of the other productions, we could have made the schedule more realistic to begin with just by adding filming days and organizing things more carefully. Tight scheduling isn't always purely a financial decision, but perhaps also lack of experience. Hopefully this is a dilemma that - even partially - vanishes in the professional field, not only because of experience but also because of the collective bargaining in the film industry. Having said all this, it is nearly impossible to make the schedule so that it's perfect, especially when you have to work with what you have got.

The schedule is inevitably a compromise, a juggling act that attempts to get the best out of all kind of conflicting needs. --- It's a task full of details and pitfalls. ---
For example, if you have hired some expensive piece of equipment --- it makes sense to schedule the scenes that it will be used close together as possible. ---
Another problem might be artistic availability --- you are likely to be at his or her mercy. --- A location might only be available on at certain times. ---
Then there's the weather. Having juggled everything and managed to get it all working for everyone's satisfaction, the weather – especially in Northern Europe – is more likely to turn the whole house of cards into a soggy mess.
(Lewis I, 2001, 62-63)

4.3 Sideline

Aiming high in every sector, *Sideline* was also to be part of several people's thesis. The main goal was to bring together all the learning and experience the crew had gained over the past years.

The locations included two different restaurants in the heart of Tampere, two universities, a residence and some outside locations. What made it easier was the fact that we were to stay in Tampere for the whole production. What worried me as a production manager were the restaurant shots in the middle of the city on a Saturday-Sunday night.

When looking back at the production of *Sideline*, I recall having to deal with communication problems quite a lot. Mostly it had to do with the confusion over job responsibilities. There were several occasions when certain tasks were handled by more than one person at the same time. For example, there were phone calls of a certain issue made several times to the same contact by different people. Also, someone from the production team had taken the liberty of making deals with the equipment renter without checking with anyone else, which caused tension on the

set and had to be solved as calmly as possible without it affecting the actual film-making. Roles should always be clear before heading into production. Then again, sometimes there are people involved that don't listen no matter what the guidelines are. Very often, these are the same people who seem to enjoy the sound of their title more than the actual work. I have encountered a lack of respect for those who have a true passion for production as well as a hard-working attitude. If nothing else, one can at least make sure to not work with these individuals again.



3) University location. Photo: Ville Salminen

As with *Tunnel*, the individual contacts in different locations made a massive difference in how difficult it was to get everything organized. For instance, it seemed easier to deal with a restaurant manager who was out of the country than it was to deal with some of the people in our own university, merely because of the attitude. Attitude makes all the difference.

4.4 *Morocco*

When props fall and everything else seems like a road to hell, it's the producer's job to jump on the table and say: "Don't worry, everything is going to be fine".

(Saku Tuominen, Creative Director, Zodiak Television Oy/ in Bertling – Rantala – Saksala, 2007, 16)⁴

Most of the filming of *Morocco* took place in Äänekoski, hundreds of kilometers from home in the middle of nowhere. This guaranteed us enough space, peace and quietness, but on the other hand, we had to make sure we brought everything we needed and knew what we wanted out of the shots, because there would be no chance to do it all again if something went wrong. The director came back to Finland no more than a couple of days before production and the two English actors only a night before. Fortunately, those three had had a chance to work through the script together in the U.K, during pre-production.

From the start, the schedule was something I had never experienced before, a juggling act indeed, and not only because the two actors were to fly back home on a certain day but also because of very demanding equipment availability. The size of the crew was kept to a minimum, mainly because of a lack of accommodation, but also because everyone and everything had to be driven so far north from Tampere. In retrospective, this decision should have been given more thought, but we had so little time in pre-production. A good example of not having enough crew is the fact that I and Anna-Maija, the production manager, slept only 12-15 hours during the five day production, simply because we had way too much to do.

Production was a combination of a difficult environment, challenging weather factors, actors that weren't familiar with the local conditions and a tight filming

⁴ Personal, free translation

schedule. A small location cabin, an even smaller sauna-cabin as a catering space/ greenroom, an outside (freezing cold) wooden toilet and a tiny road leading to the main location that was located by a lake challenged us to give a hundred per cent to keep ourselves focused and motivated. But in the end, *Morocco's* production crew definitely proved that anything is possible with the right attitude and team spirit.



4) Challenging conditions in Juupajoki. Photo: Crista Parviainen

I was extremely grateful to have each and every crew member involved in that production. Everyone knew their place and was determined to get the film done no matter how challenging the conditions. Despite some serious hardship and misfortune, an accident with one of the vehicles and another one completely breaking down, and both of the actors getting sick, we pulled it through. I have to say I couldn't help but feel slightly deceitful for getting so many of the crew involved by saying, "This time it is going to be different. No hard, long days, a well-thought schedule and enough food." This is something I have now hopefully learned

to be careful about: the promises made to people. Not that I intended to lie, but it is important be conscious of the things I promise, especially when there is no money involved. It is all they get, my word. So no matter what I believe in, I have to be careful with what I promise. The same goes with all the possible partners and sponsors. No matter how tempting it is to say, for example, that the film is going to win festivals in the future, better to be safe than sorry.

One of the best things about *Morocco* was the fact that the production was bilingual. The language on set was mostly English, which was a great opportunity for the Finnish students to get familiar with the English filming commands and terms. Also, the way of working in general naturally varies in different countries, and there is no better way of getting to know other working cultures than mixing with them. In many ways, I also believe that the fact that we had a foreign director and cast made the Finnish crew give a little bit more of themselves, just to prove that we could do it.

If not before, during *Morocco* I finally realized I had found the main people I wanted to keep working with in the future. Or, should I say I would not want to let go of after graduating. I was not the only one who felt this way. Not long after *Morocco*, I was one of eighteen TTVO students to start our own production company.

5 Post-production & Exhibition/Distribution

5.1 When it all becomes art...and commerce

Post-production, as well as exhibition and distribution, are the areas where I personally still have the most to learn when it comes to production work. This is mostly as a result of the fact that in my university these highly important areas are nearly forgotten in the teaching and mentoring process, or was for our course group anyhow.

Even if all the different sectors in post-production (editing, sound design, music, effects) advance as they are supposed to, I can honestly say I don't think I yet have a full understanding of what a functional production work includes at that point. I have only recently internalized that when it comes to post-production, this phase also needs to be well planned in the early stage of pre-production. The culture of post-production in my university has mainly been disordered; it is roughly planned and scheduled as it goes on. The producer should communicate, go through deadlines and details more often, and the crew should keep the producer updated.

With distribution and exhibition, the main dilemma in the School of Art and Media could well be in the confusion of roles. Who is the actual producer when by legal definition it is the university? When everything is done by the student producer, whose job description seems more like the role of a production manager or a line producer, who plans exhibition and distribution? Is it the line producer who sits in the editing room or the production manager who sends numerous copies of the film to various festivals? It needs to be realized that it is crucial to have more than one person working in all the production roles. In addition, most students need to recognize exactly how many projects they can juggle at the same time.

I learned the hard way that one needs to get one project to a certain point before jumping into another one. Something I didn't realize and did quite the opposite. All these are important issues that I feel need to be discussed, because without an effective distribution and exhibition plan, a film becomes worthless. Until now these areas have often been completed in a rush and mostly without any funding. Having said this, there have slowly been signs of a new, more effective way of doing things among the younger students. Hopefully, this development continues!

As David Parfitt points out (Lewis I. 2001, Foreword), when thinking about short films in particular, they are an accessible way into a complex industry and a chance to create one's own calling card.

As a producer I look at it as proof that I can handle multi-tasking between the conflicting demands of the story, the budget, the crew, the cast and the schedule...all at the same time.

5.2 *Tunnel*

The post-production of *Tunnel* still continues. I find it difficult to look at it as an on-going process, perhaps mainly due to the reasons above. I have sat in the editing room and been in contact with the director and sound-designer from time to time. I have sent copies to festivals and will continue doing so, but I know I have not had enough time or money to fulfill my role as well as it should have been done.

I also know I was so proud when I sat in the audience at the film's premiere during the Tampere Art Factory Festival in May 2008, when I finally saw the first version in a real theatre on a big screen.

I should still find the time, energy and resources to work with a graphic designer, put together DVD copies and organize a proper premiere for everyone who made the film possible. But most importantly, I should make sure *Tunnel* gets seen. Now it

almost seems like making the film was the easy part. Sending it to festivals, let alone to executives, is uncharted territory without any real guidance.

5.3 *Sideline & Morocco*

Sideline was the only one of the three films that didn't include any post-production responsibilities on my part. It was strange not to be involved yet very liberating. For a while after the filming I felt like I wanted to have my say, but decided I would not do something I myself can't stand, stepping on other people's toes and trying to have my say on things that aren't really my business. It has been interesting and great to see how determinedly the production department has worked on distribution. I recently received an e-mail saying the film got into one of the biggest short film festivals in the country.

Morocco, on the other hand had a strange post-production, mainly because in the end we didn't really have much to say about it from Finland's end. Once again, the lack of communication left me waiting for the final cut, without really being quite sure who was doing what and when. I myself had another production, an event this time which made push the whole production from my mind for the time being. It seems I wasn't the only one with new projects diverting attention away from post-production. Perhaps all this lead us to communicate as poorly as we did. Distribution and exhibition is being managed from the United Kingdom's end.

With *Morocco*, there is still a lot to do, as we haven't even had the chance to organize a proper premiere and to thank all the partners and sponsors. Something I will not be able to do by myself without putting more money of my own into it.

I have never even met the Executive Producer, but fortunately I am very close with the Director, so in spite of all the hassles in both of our lives, I believe we will be able to organize some sort of closing for the production in Finland.

SIDELINE SIDELINE

APRIL 25TH 2008

KRISTA KOSONEN

ANTTI REINI HENNA VÄNNINEN PANU MIKKOLA LAURI TANSKANEN

A FILM BY MARIA KAURISMÄKI PRODUCER KATI SYRJÄLÄ ASSOCIATED PRODUCERS PAULI KOPU,
PEKKA OLLULA PRODUCTION MANAGER EMILIA HOWELLS SOUND DESIGN MICHAEL LAW
COSTUMES JENNI TUOMINEN MAKE-UP HEINI TETRI PRODUCTION DESIGN JOHANNA TARVAINEN
GRAPHIC DESIGN KIIRA KALLIOMÄKI PHOTOGRAPHY VILLE SALMINEN
CINEMATOGRAPHY JOUKO PIIPPONEN FILM EDITING JOHANNA HARMAALA
WRITER AND DIRECTOR MARIA KAURISMÄKI



6 Conclusion

Very little involved in making a film is complicated or difficult on its own. However, getting it right means that a number of different people have to be doing their simple little things in the right order and in the right place at the right time. Arranging that so it works well can be quite difficult. The results may be art, but the process most certainly isn't.

(Lewis I. 2001, 2)

Working at the top of a production is a big responsibility, and it often means one has to be able to handle the on-going stress factors of several conflicting needs. In this thesis I mainly reflected on production work from the role of a production manager or a line producer, as I said in the beginning. The question still remains: what is it I get out of it in the end?

Personally, I love and hate it at the same time. I want to challenge myself but often I can't help wondering why in the world I won't just let myself make an easier career choice. But no matter how overwhelming things get in the film world, I have never felt as alive as I do during production. In the end, it is so much more than just a "mechanic" working on different projects. It is feeling incredibly good about what you have achieved at the end of each day. It is smiling when looking at all the people who know what they are doing - and who are doing it with a passion. I feel like I am growing and developing with each production. I learn from people I have a professional respect for. Then there is that moment when I see the credits, and not only my name but my daughter's or my parents' names on the *Special Thanks*-list. At that moment it all becomes concrete. Finally the film feels real.

A couple years ago, I was driving down a road with a family friend of mine, a mother of five. I was telling her about the production I was working on at the time. At some point, she finally asked the question I was already waiting for:

“So...what do you actually do...as a producer?”

I tried to come up with an answer that would make sense and say it all in a nutshell. Instead said:

“Tell me about your typical day.”

She turned and looked at me questioningly.

“You know what I do.”

“Tell me anyway”, I insisted.

“Let’s see...I get up in the morning before anyone else does. While making porridge for the kids, I go through the day’s schedule: who goes to school when, what hobbies do they have after school...when do I pick them up if they’re not going to a friend’s house. I read the morning paper so I know what’s going on and have breakfast with everyone. Then we go through stuff just to make sure everyone knows the plan for the day. Then I drop them off in different places. I go to work and on the way back usually do some shopping for the family. In the evening, I pay some bills, help with homework and finally just try and keep everyone safe and fed while having some quality time together.

After everyone else has gone to bed, I prepare for the next day as much as I can so that everything runs smoothly.

I smiled and turned to look at her.

“Well”, I said, “ We have a word for all that in the industry. A Producer. Only the family is slightly bigger, and the toys are cooler.”

7 Appendix

7.1 Synopses

Tunneli/ Tunnel

Year: 2008

Duration: 9'20 min

Format: HD cam

Colour

Producer/ Production Manager: Emilia Howells, Media production '04

Production Assistant: Anna-Maija Salmi, Media production '06

Director: Johanna Harmaala, Editing '04

Script Writer: Johanna Harmaala/ Robert Suhonen, Video and cinematography '04

Cinematographer: Robert Suhonen

Sound Designer: Teemu Ropilo, Sound design '05

Editor: Arttu Luukkonen, Editing '04

Composer: LJ

The film was a thesis media project for Emilia Howells, Johanna Harmaala, Robert Suhonen, Arttu Luukkonen and Jussi Lindgren for the Degree Programme of Media Studies

Synopsis:

A woman lives in an endless, boring treadmill of life. One day, on her way to work, the train she takes to work, stops in a tunnel. She is driven to a time and space where she has to make a decision; she can either go on as before, or make a change in her life.

Sideline/ Sivutyö

Year: 2008

Duration: 13 min

Format: 16mm

Colour

Producer: Kati Syrjälä, Media production '04

Associated Producers: Pauli Kopu, Pekka Ollula, Media production '07

Production Manager: Emilia Howells, Media production '06

Location Manager: Anna-Maija Salmi, Media production '06

Script Writer/ Director: Maria Kaurismäki, Video and cinematography '04

Cinematographer: Jouko Piipponen, Video and cinematography '04

Sound Designer/ Composer: Michael Law, Sound Design '07

Editor: Johanna Harmaala, Editing '04

The film was a thesis media project for Maria Kaurismäki, Emilia Howells, Jouko Piipponen, Johanna Harmaala and Jussi Lindgren for the Degree Programme of Media Studies

Synopsis:

Heli, a business student, decides to post an escort ad on the Internet. Soon she meets her first client Risto, the CEO of a Russian oriented trade company. Risto is more than willing to rent Heli's services for longer than just one night. Later, Heli takes her friends out for a fancy dinner without them knowing of her new secret career. Heli soon realizes that the money earned on the previous night is now playing a role in her present and future life.

Morocco

Year: 2008

Duration: 11'40 min

Format: HD cam

Colour

Executive Producer: Jonny Wilson, The Film Production Company, UK

Producer: Emilia Howells, Media production '04

Production Manager: Anna-Maija Salmi, Media production '06

Director: Garry Paton, Finite Productions, UK

Script Writer: Cai Ross, UK

Cinematographer: Ville Salminen, Video and cinematography '04

Sound Designer: Mikko Salo, Sound design '07

Editor: David DuBois, UK

Composer: Jamie Serafi; UK

An international co-production based on friendships formed during the International Media Programme 2006.

The film was a thesis media project for Emilia Howells and Laura Valoma (1st AD).

Synopsis:

When an old man named Jerry gets into trouble in a blizzard, it seems like he will be left for dead...until the arrival of a younger man, William, who takes him back to his isolated cabin and looks after him. Jerry's determined quest has lead him to the middle of nowhere and just as he thinks he has to move on again he finds something devastatingly interesting in the cabin.

7.2 Examples of a pitch & production information (partly in Finnish)

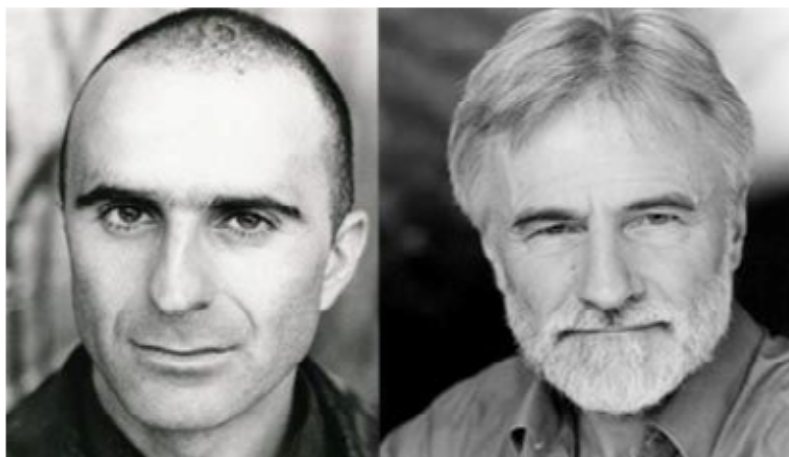


Telling [working title] is a short film that will be used as a taster for a feature film which is being written by Cai Ross, the writer of the short, who has had a number of projects commissioned by the UK Film Council.

The aim of the project is to demonstrate new talent both in the UK and in Finland using a step process in which that talent can move forward. With full support by Executive Producer (Jonny Wilson of The Film Production Company) who is highly experienced in supporting new talent into the feature film environment, Finite Productions will produce the film with a view to going into the feature environment with an army of professionals who are currently at a high standard.

Particularly, Finite Productions have enlisted Emilia Howells as Producer and Ville Salminen as Cinematographer both who are clearly ready to work in this environment. It is Finite's aim to show this talent at an international level bringing both kudos to TTVO for cultivating such talent and showcasing the performance of the individuals.

The Film Production Company will also provide the marketing and distribution for the film for the sole reason to generate interest to the feature project. The main arena will be the UK Film Council who support new talent with backing from experienced writers and producers. Jonny Wilson and Cai Ross's experience will help vastly in the pitch for feature support but clearly the film needs a production team with creative flair and production sense and it is these elements that the production team enlisted will excel at.



Finite Productions Ltd. Company Registered Number: 05863862
THE FILM PRODUCTION COMPANY
Script by: Cai Ross

Production information – *SIDELINE*:

TI 8.1 – ”Siellä täällä” - Tammela/ Kylppäri

Yhteystiedot:

SOITA AGREGAATTI !!! (Marko Rantakallio 040-801 63 52)

Varmista sähkökaapit risteys & Savilinnankatu

SOITA KUSTANNUKSISTA JUSSI WALLIN 050-5013124

Aleksanterin kirkko Jaakko Kenttä 050-557 2197 (kirkkoherra)

Pyhäjärvenkatu 7 Kari Lastunen 040-040 3111 (kylppäri)

- klo 07.45 Savilinnankadulta Jenni & Maria → koululle
- AM & Emmi koululla 08.00 → AM hakee Berlingon, Emmi hoitaa kahvit O-kerrokseen
- Emilia noutaa Kristan - maski/ puku klo 8.30 koululla (Holiday Inn)
- Anna pitää huolen että Heini koululla klo 08.30
- Call time koululla 09.00, Emilia ottaa kyytiin kuvausryhmän ja vie ekalle kuvauspaikalle, AM johdattaa
- KUVATAAN klo 10.00
- Eka valaisu Tammelassa vasta iltapäivällä!
- (Maski/puku koululla – siirtymät??)

NÄYTTELIJÄT: Krista

KARTAT: Tammela pyöräily, Tammela kävelyt, Aleksanteri kirkko, kulkutautisairaala...

Autot: Kuva: Berlingo (noudetaan ti-aamu), valo: kuorkki (noudettu ma), tuotanto: VW, mönkijä+muu iso: Transit, catering: Micra (noudettu ma) - Annalle valk.volkari jos tarvetta

KE 9.1 - Hämeensilta

Yhteystiedot:

Markku Malinen 045-112 3579 /myynti@hameensilta.fi

Sähkökaappi: Hämeenkadun ja Hatanpään valtatie risteyksessä

- AM + Emmi ja muu ryhmä ovenkahvassa klo 08.00, ryhmä suoraan kuvauspaikalle
- Emilia tulee paikalle vasta näyttelijöiden kanssa !!
- Maski/puku paikalla 09.30

- Kristan nouto Emilia klo 9.30 (Holiday Inn) – Antti Treelle omalla autolla (Holiday Inn??)
- Avustajat SUORAAN paikalle klo 11.30

NÄYTTÉLIJÄT: Krista, Antti ---- tarjoilija, portsari + avustajat taustalla

KARTAT: Hämeenkatu

Autot: Kuorkki eteen, Berlingo & paku/ Transit -----VW ja Micra minne ???

OBS!

- Soppari Markku Malinen & Emilia
- Huomioliivejä, sadevarusteet, huominauhaa
- Legendan nouto Olli H.
- Dolly purun jälkeen Savilinnankadulle valmiiksi
- Risteys – sähkökaappi??
- Raksa yläkerta hiljaseks??

TO 10.1 – Marian koti, Savilinnankatu

Yhteystiedot:

Pekka Hellsten 044-047 5008 /pekka.hellsten@pamisoy.fi

Sähköt: Savilinnankatu: 2 x ABB Strömbergin kaappia (Savilinnankatu 1 ja Savilinnankatu 9)

- Maski/puku koululla klo 04.00! (Emilia hakee = JENNI, KRISTA, HEINI!)
(Em lähtee likat kuvauspaikalle tuotuaan käymään Epilässä!)
- Valo & AM + Emmi paikalla 05.00
- Muu kuvausryhmä & Reini paikalla 05.30 – kuvausryhmä suoraan paikalle, Reini omalla autolla?
- HARJOITUSVALMIUS klo 06.00
- Maski siirtyy aamun jälkeen loppupäiväksi Savilinnankadulle (Emilian kyydissä)
- Catering Savilinnankadulla
- KRISTAN OLTAVA ASEMALLA KLO 15.30 (E)

NÄYTTÉLIJÄT: Krista, Antti

KARTAT: Savilinnankatu

Autot: parkkeeraus ok – mihin ikinä paikanpäällä

OBS!!!

- **Kraanan nouto?**

PE 11.1 – Yliopisto

Yhteystiedot:

Hilkka Aavola/ vahtimestarit, info

- Jenni, Krista, Heini; haku klo 06.00, maski/puku klo 6.30
- Kuvausryhmä koululla klo 08.00 (Valo yliopistolla klo 08)
- Ruokailu Juvenes
- AVUSTAJAT suoraan paikalle?
-

Autot: Mersu!!

OBS!!!

- INFO-lappu yliopistolle
- Parkkeeraus infottava vakseille/ infolle
- Tuotannon porukkaa/ runneri jeesinä ihmismassojen kanssa...
- Juvenekselta kahvi/sämpylätila!?

LA 12.1 – TAMK, Teiskontien juhlasali

Yhteystiedot:

Ulla Pielismaa 040-847 26 20

Päivystävä isännöitsijä 03-565 47 240

- Jennin, Kristan ja Heinin nouto (Emilia) klo 05.30, maski/puku 06.00
- Valo TAMKilla klo 07.00 , call time kuvausryhmä klo 07.45
- Lauri Tanskanen, nouto kotoa 08.30 → maski koululla!
- Ruokailu Teiskontiellä, avustajat catering
- Kello 16 jälkeen Ike tai joku henkilökunnasta paikalle mikäli tarvis....

- Autot: Mersu!!

OBS!!!

- Kirjasto auki 9-15 + neukkari varattu koko päivä
- Accessit sivuoveen AM & Jussi L.

SU 13.1 – Coyote

Yhteystiedot:

Tanja Virtanen 045-670 42 92

- Maski: Krista klo 01.00, Henna klo 01.30, Panu 02.15
- Valo paikanpäällä klo 02.00, muu ryhmä suoraan kuvauspaikalle 02.30
- Takapihalle Berlingo, Micra
- Avustajia n. 15

Autot: Mersu!!

MA 14.1 – EXTRAT, Tornitalon katto

Kalevan puistotie 23 A Hilikka Kankaansivu 03-212 9476 (ti-to 12-16:30)

CREW: Maria, Jokke, Jussi, AM

- autojen palautus ym...

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